BASH

By Lt. Larry Tarver

From 1980 to present, the Navy had:

18 Class A mishaps costing $352,994,491
33 Class B mishaps costing $8,269,040
341 Class C mishaps costing $17,602,563
21,830 hazreps (many with no cost entered), totaling $2,106,238
Total cost to the Navy: $380,972,332

Do you report every bird strike? Or every deer sighting on the runway?

A critical aspect of any bird-animal-strike-hazard (BASH) program is reporting. When you report bird and animal activity around the airfield environment, as well as actual strikes, you provide the most accurate and real-time information for increasing pilot awareness and decreasing BASH incidents.

The pilot on final approach, the person driving the duty sweeper, and the contractor refueling parked aircraft should contact the tower and provide information about wildlife activity. This activity may pose a threat to aircrews and aircraft. Reporting a near-miss with wildlife is just as important. This data, coupled with actual strike data, provides local BASH teams with information to resolve wildlife issues.

When you report aircraft strikes and any wildlife (dead or alive) found on the runway surfaces, you should include information on the species, location and time. You can get help with species identification from your local USDA biologist, base BASH team, or from base-operations personnel. They then can highlight problem areas in the airfield environment and on low-level routes. Given this data, the experts can find out what attracts a species to a particular area, and in most cases, the attractant can be removed or avoided. Low-level routes can be modified and local operations can be conducted.

According to recent studies, the cost to military and commercial aviation from bird and animal hazards is more than $1.5 billion each year. This cost includes aircraft loss and damage and out-of-service delays.

The Naval Safety Center estimates only about 25 percent of all BASH incidents get reported, so the figures above underestimate the scope of the problem. Accurate reporting is critical to identifying hazards and preventing mishaps. If you don't report a problem, no one knows it exists, and nothing can or will be done to fix it.

BASH is a safety and operational issue, not a natural-resource issue. Currently, individual installations fund their BASH programs, based on the requirements of their local instructions. This arrangement has created vast differences in effectiveness between various locations because of a lack of specific department-wide guidance and requirements. Currently, the Navy is working to develop, fund and implement a Navy-wide BASH program, which would increase the overall effectiveness and decrease the risk to aircrew, aircraft and other Navy assets.

You can get online information regarding BASH conditions at http://www.usahas.com. Use the search menus to get the current conditions in your area or for your intended route. The website updates every six minutes and is as close as you can get to real-time information, unless you have a local BASH radar system at your airfield.—*Lt. Tarver is the BASH analyst, Naval Safety Center.*

You can get more information from Matt Klope, the Navy and Marine Corps BASH program manager. Any strike remains that cannot be locally identified also should be forwarded to him.

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